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ABSTRACT

The Economic Education Center of the College of St. Thomas conducted this survey of social studies and business education programs in the St. Paul area high schools to procure information for determining (1) the types of services needed by classroom teachers in the field of economics and (2) the nature of programs which should be offered by the center. The survey examined the academic backgrounds of the teachers, their preparation in economics, the extent and nature of course offerings in economics, and the types of programs which the teachers would like to have available in order to help them become more effective and proficient teachers of economics. The results indicated that only 5 percent of the 241 who returned the questionnaires had undergraduate majors in economics. Sixty-four percent of the teachers responding indicated that they would like to further their knowledge in economics. The measurement of the extent of high school course offerings in economics showed that economics is generally not offered as a required course. Rather it is often taught as an elective course or as part of a general social studies course. (Author/DE)

A Study of Economic Education in St. Paul and Area High Schools

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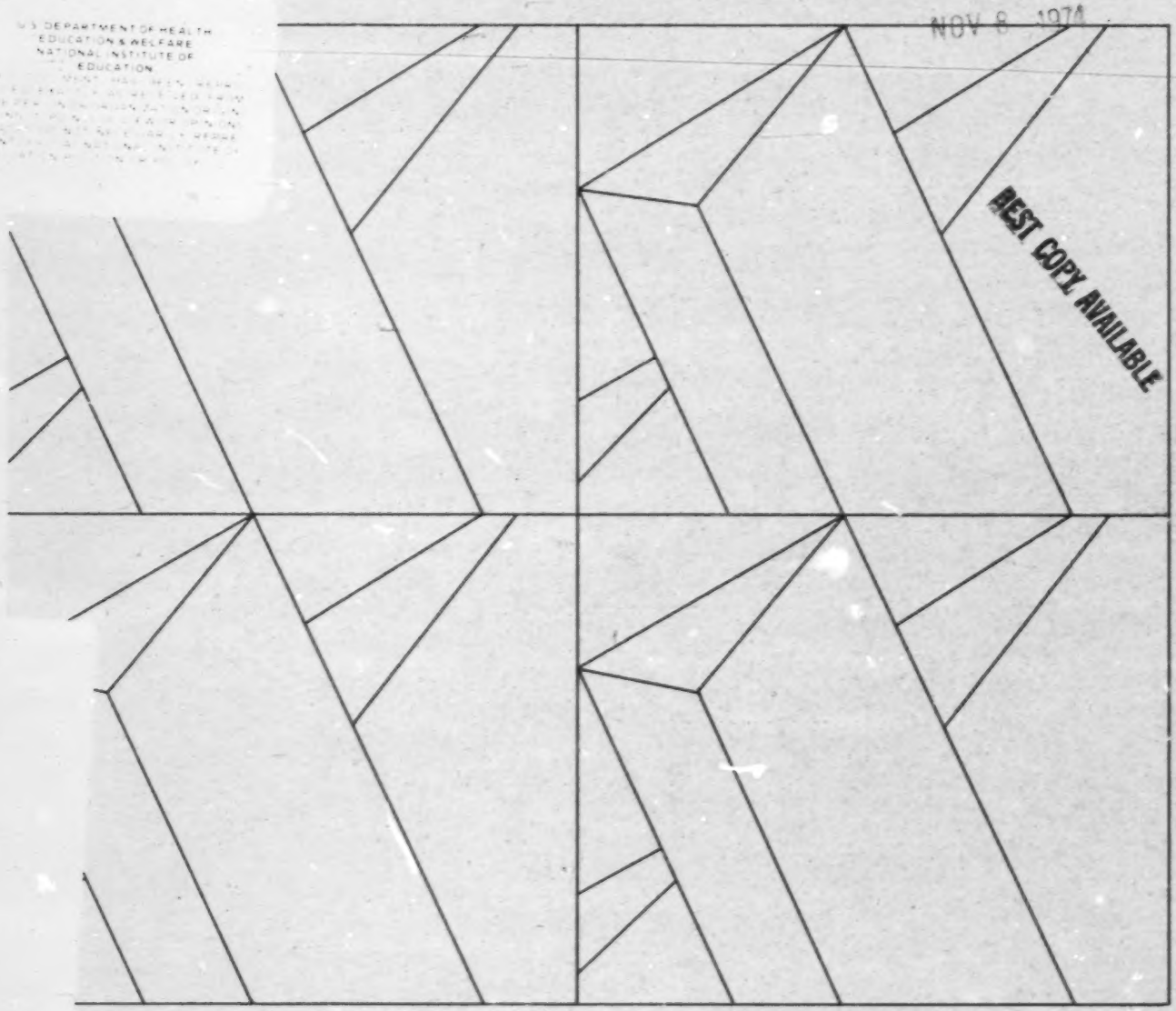

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If our citizens of tomorrow are to achieve the desired minimum economic understanding, most of them must get it in the schools. It is no good to say that they can wait until college, for less than half of them go on to college, and most of those do not study economics when they get there. Thus, most of our youth must rely on the high schools for the economics they are to learn.

Economic Education in the Schools
National Task Force on Economic Education
Committee for Economic Development

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Acknowledgements

Many individuals and several large groups have played significant roles in the preparation, execution, and analysis of this survey; the author would like to take this opportunity to express his gratitude to them.

Special thanks are offered to the St. Paul secondary school social studies and business education teachers, who contributed most significantly to the completion of this study - their cooperation is greatly appreciated. Profound thanks go to the Minnesota State Council on Economic Education which provided financial help for this endeavor, and to the many educators who gave their whole-hearted support and cooperation toward the successful completion of the study.

After having conceived the idea for this survey, and having determined the scope of the project, the author found it necessary to enlist the specialized help of several people to insure its effective execution and completion. In this regard, Dr. Sue Sekhri, of the Department of Education at the College of St. Thomas, helped to plan the survey questionnaire, distributed it to thirty-two public and parochial schools in St. Paul, and assisted in writing this report. Mary Nachtsheim assisted in the distribution of the questionnaire, tabulated the raw data, and typed the manuscript. Michael Tervo and Joseph A. Plante made the final compilation and interpretation of the data.

To all of these people, the author extends his sincere thanks.

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Introduction

The research reported in this document was founded on the basic premise that in order to provide high school students with viable and in-depth understanding of the political and economic institutions of this country, a teacher should be fully cognizant of both the knowledge and teaching processes evolving in his area of specialization. In order to maintain this kind of awareness, it is important that the teacher develop a continuing understanding of the conceptual structures of knowledge in his areas of teaching, create models of effective teaching strategies and materials, develop skills which include interpretation and evaluation of performance, and, finally, realize the importance of professional growth within an educational institution.

The results of this survey have provided sufficient information for determining the kinds of programs which will help teachers to maintain the standards of professionalism mentioned above, particularly in the area of economics.

Studies like this one have been conducted in several parts of the country, including the state of Minnesota. This type of evaluation has helped teachers to recognize the need for expanding their knowledge and skills in their own and related fields.

A Brief Preview of the Survey

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The Economic Education Center of the College of St. Thomas conducted this survey of social studies and business education programs in the St. Paul area high schools to procure information that will be helpful in determining the types of services needed by classroom teachers in the field of economics, and to determine the nature of programs which should be offered by the Economic Education Center to fulfill these needs.

The survey examined the following areas:

- The general academic backgrounds of St. Paul area high school social studies and business education teachers, both at the graduate and undergraduate levels;
- Their preparation in economics specifically;
- The extent and nature of course offerings in economics in St. Paul high schools;
- The types of information and programs which the teachers would like to see offered in order to help them become more effective and proficient teachers of economics.

To gather this information, a survey comprised of thirty multiple choice and word completion questions with sufficent space for additional comments was used. This instrument was distributed to 380 social studies and business education teachers in high schools (grades nine through twelve) in the St. Paul area. Both public and private high schools were included in order to make research all-encompassing in nature.

Of the 380 questionnaires distributed, 241 were returned, for an overall response rate of 63.4 percent. This response rate compares favorably with the 50 percent received and reported in the State Wide Profile of Economic Education in Minnesota, a study compiled by the Minnesota State Council on Economic Education in 1971.

The chief findings of the survey are as follows:

- Approximately 46 percent of the respondents had ten or more years of teaching experience; 26 percent had between seven and ten years, and 32 percent had one to six years of experience.
- In regard to the undergraduate major: 35 percent of those responding had undergraduate majors in history, five percent had majors in economics, and 25 percent had majors in social science other than history or economics.
- The master's degree had been completed by 42 percent of the respondents, and the predominant majors were history, education, and educational administration.
- History and Business Education were the courses most frequently taught by the surveyed teachers, followed by Social Problems and Political Science. Most of these classes were taught to 11th and 12th graders.
- Economics was generally not offered as a required course, though it was often taught as a separate course or unit of another course, frequently titled "Social Studies," and selected by students of diverse ability levels.
- The Economics texts most frequently used were Consumer Economics (Gregg) and The Worldly Philosophers (Heilbroner).
- Large and small group discussions, resource persons and materials, films, and many other teaching techniques were used in each of the three systems surveyed.

Limitations of the Study

It seems appropriate to list some of the ambiguities in the survey instrument which might have affected the way in which the teachers responded, and the results which we are attempting to analyze.

First, no clear definition was provided as to which areas of social studies would be labelled as economics: that dealing with current economic issues, or the teaching of only the principles of economics, or both. Some respondents who indicated that they did not teach economics may well have answered in the affirmative if this had been communicated more precisely.

Second, a number of typographical errors and some inappropriate phraseology may have caused some confusion in the minds of the respondents concerning some questions.

Third, some responses were conspicuously incomplete because of lack of information or lack of conscientious effort on the part of some respondents to gather that material for survey purposes. Incomplete questionnaires were eliminated because it was felt that this would affect the legitimization of the result.

Last, the writer is aware of the limitations of the questionnaire as a method of investigation, but the nature of this study was such that the questionnaire technique seemed the most reasonable for collecting the data.

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Academic Profile of Responding Teachers

By way of introduction to the background of the respondents to this survey, brief mention of their teaching experience and status should be made.

The teachers surveyed in this study were as experienced as one would expect in a dynamic educational system; that is, 46 percent of the 241 respondents had more than ten years of teaching experience, 22 percent had from seven to ten years, and the remaining 32 percent had anywhere from one to six years of experience. (Table I.)

As expected, the majority of the respondents had full-time teaching status: 224 of the 241 teachers, or 93 percent of those responding, taught full-time. Five percent consisted of part-time instructors, and the remainder were either counselors or substitutes involved in part-time teaching.

The level of academic preparation of these teachers was relatively high. With the exception of one teacher who was in the process of completing an undergraduate degree, all of the respondents had attained the bachelor's degree. As regards graduate work, many had credit beyond the bachelor's degree, about 42 percent had finished the master's degree, and graduate credit beyond the M.A. had been earned by some.

Table I **Experience of Teachers**

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Years of Teaching	Total	City	Suburban	Private
1 - 3	23%	22%	22%	25%
4 - 6	9%	8%	10%	10%
7 - 10	22%	22%	18%	25%
More than 10	46%	48%	50%	40%

As Table II (see page 4) indicates, most social studies teachers majored in history at the undergraduate level, and history majors were about twice as numerous as the next most frequently mentioned major, business education. Sociology and political science were a pair in close contest for the third and fourth positions. Of the total respondents, only 17 had undergraduate majors in economics, which indicates a striking imbalance in the preparation of social studies teachers in this field.

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Table II **Undergraduate Majors**

	Total Survey				City Public				Suburban Public				Area Private			
	Semester Hours		Quarter Hours		Semester Hours		Quarter Hours		Semester Hours		Quarter Hours		Semester Hours		Quarter Hours	
	0-30	30+	0-50	50+	0-30	30+	0-50	50+	0-30	30+	0-50	50+	0-30	30+	0-50	50+
History	21	28	23	12	8	9	7	1	8	10	13	9	5	9	3	2
Bus. Ed.	7	10	7	28	2	1	3	6	3	6	4	21	2	3	-	-
Sociology	7	5	9	3	3	2	5	3	3	1	4	-	1	2	-	-
Pol. Sci.	3	4	10	5	1	1	1	1	2	2	9	4	-	1	-	-
Economics	7	5	3	2	2	1	-	1	3	4	2	1	2	-	1	-

According to Table III, secretarial studies and accounting were the main areas of concentration within the business education major (52 of the 77 business education majors responding).

As regards the area of specialization for the master's degree, history and education majors were predominant both for the Private and Suburban systems. However, in the City system, educational administration was the specialization most frequently mentioned. (Notwithstanding the fact that many teachers had completed courses in economics during their graduate programs, and had thereby become more qualified to teach economics, overall, only two of the 170 master's degrees had economics as their major area of concentration.)

Table III **Areas of Concentration within the Business Education Major**

Conceptrations	Total	City	Suburban	Private
Secretarial Studies	36	7	24	5
Accounting	16	5	9	2
Economics	7	3	4	-
Office Management	5	-	3	2
Distributive Education	3	-	3	-
Law	3	1	1	1
Management	2	-	2	-
Marketing	2	-	2	-
Business Administration	1	-	1	-
Data Processing	1	-	1	-
Basic Business	1	-	1	-

Teacher Preparation in Economics

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A national study conducted by Professors G. L. Bach and Phillip Saunders on the retention of economics over time revealed that teacher performances on standardized tests does not rise appreciably until they have taken at least three to five graduate courses (9-15 credits) in economics. (American Economic Review, 56 (June, 1966), 505-511.) By that measure, 38 percent of St. Paul social studies/business education teachers still lack adequate preparation for the teaching of economics. Our findings reveal that on the undergraduate level, 31 percent of the teachers had ten or more credits in economics. On the graduate level, 18 percent had fewer than ten credits, and seven percent had ten or more credits.

In comparing the three systems, City, Suburban, and Private, it is apparent that the Suburban system had teachers with superior preparation in economics. (Table IV) That is, of the total of 68 teachers who had earned ten or more credits in economics, 49 (about 72%) were from the Suburban schools. The teachers from the Private schools were better prepared in economics than those from the City system. At the graduate level, we again find that the Suburban system had teachers with superior qualifications; that is, of the total of fifteen teachers with ten or more credits in economics, ten were from the Suburban system.

The three systems did not vary widely in the types of economics courses taken by members of their faculties. However, with two exceptions, not a single teacher in the City system had taken a course in Economic Institutions, and the preparation of the Suburban teachers seems to substantially exceed that of both the City and Private systems in the area of Comparative Economic Systems.

Table IV **Distribution of Economics Courses Taken in College**

Course	Total (%)	Total	City	Suburban	Private
Principles (micro and macro)	69.2	167	43	98	26
Money and Banking	31.9	77	21	46	10
Economic Geography	22.8	55	14	33	8
Comparative Economic Systems	19.1	46	9	30	7
Public Finance	15.3	37	9	21	7
Economic Institutions	11.2	27	0	20	7
No Answer	19.1	46	13	19	14

Extent of Social Studies/Business Education Offerings in the Schools

In both the overall survey and in the three systems, History and Business Education were the courses taught most often, with History taught by a little more than 40 percent of the teachers, and Business Education by about 32 percent. After these subjects, which held first and second places, the following subjects held third place: Social Problems (City system) and Political Science (Suburban and Private systems). Sociology held fourth place in all systems. Economics did not show up strongly until fifth place in the Private and Suburban systems, while it occupied seventh place in the City system. It is interesting to note that 17 percent of the Private teachers had a class in Economics, and 16 percent of the Suburban teachers did so, but only eight percent of the City teachers fit into this category.

- Nineteen percent of the respondents taught fifteen or fewer classes of History per week.
- Fourteen percent of the respondents taught fifteen or more classes of History per week.
- Eleven percent taught fifteen or fewer Business Education classes per week.
- Twenty-one percent taught fifteen or more Business Education classes per week.

Seventy-eight percent of the respondents instructed 12th grade students, 71 percent instructed 11th graders, 52 percent instructed 10th graders, and only ten percent instructed 9th graders. This grade level order generally prevailed in the Suburban and Private schools, but in the City system, 71 percent instructed 11th graders, while only 66 percent taught 12th graders. Eighty-three percent of the Suburban and Private teachers taught 12th graders. Interesting to note was the fact that one course in the Suburban system was taught to a non-graded class.

As we examine the place of economics in the total social studies curriculum, we find that a clear majority of the teachers surveyed indicated that their schools did *not* offer economics as a required course. This is emphasized by the following figures: 41 percent of the teachers in the Private system said that economics was offered as a required course, while in the City system the figure was 10 percent, and in the Suburban system, 26 percent.

On the other hand, 53 percent of the respondents indicated that economics *was* offered as a *separate* course in their schools, while 35 percent said that it was offered as a unit of another course, usually titled Social Studies. The remaining 12 percent did not offer any economics.

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In those instances where economics is offered as a unit of another course, we find that Social Studies is the predominant course title by a large margin — almost 60 percent of the responses favored this title. The next most frequently mentioned titles were Consumer Economics (6%), American History (5%), Political Science/Economics (5%), and General Business (3%). The range among other titles was from Anthropology to Foreign Policy to Humanities to Marriage.

In regard to the choice of economics as an elective by students, the majority indicated that less than 25 percent of the students chose economics as an elective. And in regard to the ability level of those students, ten percent of the teachers expressed the opinion that economics students were generally of superior ability, while 20 percent felt that students with average abilities made the choice of economics as an elective. In effect then, students with diverse ability levels selected economics. (Table V.)

The survey also attempted to determine which texts were being used in the teaching of economics. When economics was offered as a separate course, the following books were used most frequently:

Consumer Economics, Gregg	16.3%
The Worldly Philosophers, Heilbroner	9.8%
Economics: Principles, Problems, and Policies, McConnell	8.1%
Consumer Economic Problems, Wilson-Eyster	8.1%

Table V **Distribution of Ability Levels of Economics Students**

Ability Level	City (%)	Suburban (%)	Private (%)
Superior	2	14	7
Average	24	15	30
Slow	17	3	7
Heterogeneously grouped	24	34	32

Some differences surfaced when texts used by the three systems were examined. In the City system, Consumer Economics and Consumer Economic Problems were most commonly used. In the Suburban system, The Worldly Philosophers and Economics: Principles, and Policies were used more frequently, and in the Private schools, Economics for Our Times (A. Smith) and Minnesota Project Social Studies were the common choice.

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Table VI shows that, in the area of teaching strategies, all systems used several methods in the teaching of economics. They ranged from large and small group discussions to games and simulations to the use of films, and other techniques as well. Interesting to note was that the suburban schools were the only group which used the independent study technique with its students.

Table VI **Teaching Methods Usually Adopted by St. Paul Area Teachers of Social Studies/Business Education**

Teaching Method	City		Suburban		Private	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Holding Large group discussions	33	55.9	59	39.5	20	28.7
Holding small group discussions	31	52.5	74	62.1	14	34.1
Use of resource materials	40	67.7	74	62.1	19	46.3
Use of taped material	15	27.1	44	36.9	8	19.5
Use of films	34	57.6	59	49.5	4	34.1
Use of games and simulations	25	42.3	40	33.6	8	19.5
Use of resource persons	29	49.1	51	42.8	13	31.7
Independent study			4	3.3		
No answer			27	22.6	11	26.8

Indicators for Future Programs

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In order to gain insight into the preparation, interests, and problems of teachers in the area of economic education, the teachers were asked to indicate which areas of Social Studies or Business Education they enjoyed teaching most, and which ones they enjoyed teaching least. In addition, they were asked to list the reasons for these choices, and were given a number of possible answers: their own level of preparation, availability of materials, the interest of students, the number of students required to take the course, and so on.

The eight subjects which teachers enjoyed teaching *most* were ranked in the following order on the overall survey:

History	88%
Political Science	80%
Sociology	74%
Economics	67%
Business Education	67%
Psychology	55%
Anthropology	52%
Geography	46%

In comparing the three systems, Political Science had the highest number of favorable responses in the City system (93%) and the lowest in the Suburban system (73%). The pattern of favorable responses was the same for History among the three systems. Economics had the highest number of favorable responses in the Private system (50%) and the lowest in the City system (41%).

Overall, the ranking for the reasons they enjoyed teaching these courses is as follows:

"I feel myself adequately prepared in the subject matter."

"I feel myself best prepared in the teaching methodology."

"Students seem more interested in this area."

"The best references and resource materials are available."

"I have the largest number of students taking courses in this area as an elective."

This order varied only very slightly for the three systems, except for the fact that "best reference materials" accounted for smaller percentages in the City and Private systems.

"I feel that I do not have sufficient academic preparation in that subject" was the main reason that the respondents did *not* enjoy teaching a certain subject. Of particular interest is the fact that only ten percent of the Suburban teachers and seven percent of the Private teachers indicated that a lack of reference or resource materials was the main reason for not enjoying a particular subject, while this reason was chosen by 24 percent of the City teachers. This seems to indicate that the City system has a comparative deficiency in providing current reference materials to its teachers.

The respondents to this survey expressed their strong desire to have resource materials available to them for better preparation, especially in the areas of Social Issues (22%), Stock Market Operations (15%), Taxation (14%), and Real Estate (13%). The fact that Economics of Social Issues is the top choice can probably be traced to the fact that information on issues allows coverage of current events without the necessity of a separate course, and to the fact that it capitalizes on lively student interest.

Of the 241 respondents to the survey, 154 (64%) indicated that if tuition scholarship and release time were provided, they would be interested in taking an in-service program in economics. This evidence emphasizes the fact that St. Paul

teachers are eager to participate in academic activities which will up-date their economics preparation.

Forty-eight percent of those responding chose the summer workshop time as the most desireable for their purposes, and these three remaining time periods elicited the following responses: late afternoon classes, 46 percent; evening classes, 39 percent, and weekend seminars, 24 percent.

As a matter of fact, 28 percent of the respondents indicated that they had already attended workshops or programs in economics, which compares closely with the 29 percent reported in the State-Wide Profile. The answers were distributed by system as follows: City, 16; Suburban, 31; Private, 10. Participation in such workshops by teachers in the Private schools did not start until 1965; but the rate at which they have participated since 1970 has outstripped that of both the City and Suburban systems.

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Recommendations

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If adequate preparation is the reason most respondents enjoy their favorite course, and lack of sufficient preparation was the primary reason for not enjoying a particular subject, it seems logical to provide teachers with more curriculum materials and training in the various disciplines, especially economics. This is particularly true now that economics has achieved the status of an "accepted" course in the curriculum.

Since the St. Thomas Center's special geographical area of concentration is St. Paul, then a good deal of the responsibility for fulfilling the needs of the respondents to this survey should fall to the Center. (Prior to its formal designation as a Center in 1971 by the Joint Council on Economic Education, St. Thomas College was involved for several years in Minnesota's economic education programs.)

To fulfill the needs to which the St. Thomas Center addresses itself, the author recommends the following:

- To continue to offer graduate courses in economic education for teachers taking individual courses, or courses which are part of a program leading to a master's degree.
- To increase the number and amount of graduate tuition scholarships for qualified teachers in these programs.
- To expand the curriculum materials library at the St. Thomas Center, and to increase its capacity for distribution.
- To assist school systems which want to implement the Developmental Economic Education Program as a means of curriculum change.
- To offer inservice instructional programs for teachers who wish to expand their economic knowledge and skills.
- To conduct summer programs in economic education. These programs will include specially-designed workshops which
  - emphasize the problem-solving approach in the teaching of high school economics;
  - are addressed to teachers with limited formal training in economics;
  - focus on consumer economics and social issues;
  - emphasize economic analysis and empirical research studies with application in economics for superior high school students
- To encourage the use of the individualized audio-tutorial instructional programs in economics developed by the St. Thomas Center, by making these materials more accessible to high school teachers.
- To circulate more widely the collection of material on games and simulations, and to make the film on gaming (Learning Games and Simulations: Selection, Use, and Evaluation(more available. (This film was was produced by the St. Thomas Center, and received a Minnesota Education Association School Bell Award for 1972.)
- To increase the curriculum materials in World Economics. (The St. Thomas Center was selected by the Joint Council as the national repository for information on World Economics.)

In Summary

In surveying the field of economic education in St. Paul area high schools, a few questions were asked, and the answers to these questions were used to determine the value of the elements making up the component parts of the field.

This study provides some basis for appraising the supportive services and programs offered currently by the Economic Education Center, and for charting the course of economic education in the future. We hope that this document will be helpful to everyone involved with curriculum in general, and economic education specifically, and that the studies which follow will sharpen the focus of the present study to more effectively fulfill the constantly changing needs of teachers and their students.

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